

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 OPR-02 /064 W

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P R 291253Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2006

INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 20539

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: THAI POLITICAL CRISIS EASES

REF: BANGKOK 20387 (R 270445Z SEP 75)

SUMMARY: THAI POLITICAL CRISIS HAS EASED SOMEWHAT WITH AGREE-  
MENT REACHED OVER WEEKEND ON KEY MILITARY APPOINTMENTS. LIST  
OF APPOINTMENTS IS LARGELY GENERAL KRIT'S LIST, WITH A  
FEW CHANGES TO SAVE FACE FOR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN.  
GENERAL KRIT HAS CLEARLY LOST THIS ROUND IN HIS BID TO  
BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ALTHOUGH HE MAY RETAIN  
SOME INFLUENCE WITH PRIME MINISTER AS AN ADVISER TO INTERNAL  
SECURITY OPERATION COMMAND (ISOC). MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE  
THAWIT HAS THREATENED TO PULL SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY OUT OF  
GOVERNMENT COALITION BY OCT 2 IF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
PRAMAN DOES NOT RESIGN AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE BY THAT  
TIME. WE TEND TO DOUBT SERIOUSNESS OF THAWIT'S  
THREAT TO PULL OUT OF COALITION. MEANWHILE, KHUKRIT  
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HAS SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER CABINET RESHUFFLE ONLY IF

COUNTRY WOULD BENEFIT AND ONLY AFTER BUDGET APPROVED  
(EXPECTED BEFORE OCT 13). END SUMMARY.

1. THAI POLITICAL CRISIS HAS EASED SOMEWHAT WITH AGREEMENT REACHED OVER WEEKEND BETWEEN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN AND ACTING SUPREME COMMANDER GENERAL KRIT ON LIST OF KEY MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS. IN EFFECT, LIST IS AS ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY GENERAL KRIT, BUT WITH A FEW CHANGES TO SAVE FACE FOR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN. KEY APPOINTMENTS WILL BE REPORTED IN SEPTEL. POLITICAL CRISIS HAS NOT RPT NOT BEEN ENTIRELY RESOLVED, AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES (AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY LEADER) THAWIT KLINPRATHUM URGED ON SEPT 29 THAT PRAMAN RESIGN HIS PORTFOLIO AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND TURN IT OVER TO PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AND THREATENED TO PULL SJP OUT OF COALITION IF PRAMAN DID NOT RELINQUISH DEFENSE POST BY OCT 2.

2. MILITARY SITUATION - GENERAL KRIT TOLD CHARGE AT LUNCH SEPT 29 THAT, AT REQUEST OF PRIME MINISTER, HE WILL ACCEPT APPOINTMENT AS ADVISER TO INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC) FOLLOWING HIS RETIREMENT FROM ROYAL THAI ARMY SEPT 30. KRIT SAID THAT MANY PEOPLE HAD WANTED HIM TO BECOME AN ADVISER TO PRIME MINISTER, AND KHUKRIT WAS AGREEABLE. HOWEVER, KRIT SAID HE WAS CONCERNED THAT ENTERING POLITICAL ARENA IN THIS WAY WOULD CREATE DISSENSION, AND HE THEREFORE PREFERRED LESS VISIBLE POSITION OF ADVISER TO ISOC (OF WHICH PRIME MINISTER IS TITULAR HEAD).

3. KRIT SAID THAT GOVERNMENT AND KING HAVE APPROVED ALL MAJOR APPOINTMENTS HE HAD RECOMMENDED TO FILL TOP MILITARY COMMAND POSITIONS (LIST WAS MADE PUBLIC LATER ON SEPT 29 AND WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL). HE ADDED IN SEPARATE COMMENT TO DATT AT SAME LUNCHEON THAT HE HAD GIVEN IN ON A COUPLE OF APPOINTMENTS TO SAVE FACE FOR PRAMAN.

4. KRIT WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF PRAMAN IN CONVERSATION  
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WITH CHARGE. HE SAID THAT WHEN PRESENT CABINET WAS FORMED, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT HAD HIMSELF INTENDED TO KEEP DEFENSE PORTFOLIO. PRAMAN ASKED KRIT TO INTERVENE ON HIS BEHALF, AND KRIT DID SO, SUCCESSFULLY. KRIT SAID HE IS QTE DISAPPOINTED END QTE WITH PRAMAN BECAUSE HE HAS FORGOTTEN HIS QTE FORMER FRIENDS END QTE AND, BY TRYING TO PUT HIS OWN PEOPLE INTO KEY COMMAND POSITIONS, HE ENDANGERED THE UNITY OF THE ARMED

FORCES. KRIT SEES THAILAND'S SECURITY ENDANGERED AS NEVER BEFORE AS RESULT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN INDO-CHINA. HE STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT HE WOULD TAKE NO RPT NO ACTION WHICH WOULD DIVIDE THE ARMED FORCES OR THE COUNTRY AND AGAIN DISCLAIMED ANY INTENTION OF FOMENTING A MILITARY COUP.

5. POLITICAL SITUATION - IN INTERVIEW WITH BANGKOK POST PUBLISHED SEPT 29 MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE THAWIT SHARPLY CRITICIZED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND DEFENSE MINISTER PRAMAN AND CALLED FOR HIS RESIGNATION FROM DEFENSE PORTFOLIO. HE URGED THAT PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PERSONALLY TAKE THE CONTROVERSIAL POST. THAWIT GAVE DEADLINE OF OCT 2 FOR PRAMAN TO GIVE UP DEFENSE PORTOLIO, FAILING WHICH, HE SAID, SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (WHICH HOLDS 45 SEATS IN PARLIAMENT AND IS LARGEST SINGLE MEMBER OF GOVERNMENT COALITION) WOULD PULL OUT OF COALITION. BANGKOK POST QUOTED PRAMAN IN REPLY AS SAYING THAT IF HE IS SQUEEZED OUT OF DEFENSE, HE WILL LEAVE THE CABINET. (PRAMAN'S THAI NATION PARTY HOLDS 28 SEATS IN PARLIAMENT AND IS SECOND LARGEST COALITION PARTNER.)

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6. COMMENT. KRIT HAS CLEARLY LOST THIS ROUND IN HIS BID TO BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE. IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE, HE ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY SITUATION IN BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT. HOWEVER, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT KRIT'S INFLUENCE WILL RAPIDLY ERODE UNLESS SOME NEW ELEMENT IS INJECTED INTO SITUATION. IN RECENT CONTROVERSY OVER KEY MILITARY APPOINTMENTS, KRIT'S REPLACEMENT AS ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, GENERAL BOONCHAI, APPARENTLY DESERTED KRIT AND SIDED WITH PRAMAN. ALTHOUGH KRIT "WON" OVER THE ISSUE OF APPOINTMENTS, PRAMAN IS AT THIS STAGE STILL MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND BOONCHAI IS TO BECOME ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, WHERE THEY WILL BE IN POSITION, OVER PERIOD OF TIME, TO REARRANGE APPOINTMENTS TO SUIT THEIR INTERESTS.

7. ON RELATED CABINET CRISIS, OUTCOME AS PRESENTLY EMERGING SEEMS TO INVOLVE NO RPT NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ARRANGEMENT PORTFOLIOS. STRUGGLE BETWEEN KRIT AND PRAMAN WILL SHIFT FROM MILITARY TO POLITICAL ARENA, WHERE PRAMAN PRESENTLY HAS THE ADVANTAGE. IT MUST BE NOTED TO KRIT'S CREDIT THAT HE CONTINUES TO PLAY ACCORDING TO RULES HE HAS FOLLOWED SINCE CONFIDENTIAL

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OVERTHROW OF THANOM GOVERNMENT IN OCTOBER 1973. HE IS ONLY PERSON IN THAILAND AT THIS TIME WHO HAS POWER TO ATTEMPT MILITARY COUP WITH ANY REASONABLE HOPE OF SUCCESS. HE HAS NOT DONE THIS, AND WE DO NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE HE WILL. AT SAME TIME HE IS KEEPING HIMSELF AVAILABLE ON SHELF IN CASE THE COLLAPSE OF PRESENT CABINET MIGHT AT SOME POINT OPEN NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

8. ON THE WHOLE, WE TEND TO DOUBT THAT THREAT BY THAWIT TO PULL OUT OF COALITION IF PRAMAN DOES NOT RESIGN FROM DEFENSE PORTFOLIO IS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF KRIT'S APPARENT ACCEPTANCE OF THE OSIC ADVISORY ROLE. ALTHOUGH GENERAL KRIT HAS SUPPORTERS WITHIN THAWIT'S SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY, THE SJP IS FACTIONALIZED, AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THAWIT COULD DELIVER THE WHOLE PARTY DURING A SHOWDOWN VOTE. THAWIT'S PUBLIC OUTBURST SEPTEMBER 29 MIGHT ALSO DAMAGE SJP BECAUSE IT MAY TEND TO STRENGTHEN THE HANDS OF SJP FACTION LEADERS WHO ARE JOCKEYING FOR POSITIONS IN A POSSIBLE, RESHUFFLED CABINET.

9. IN STATEMENT TO PRESS MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 29 PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT DECLARED HE WOULD CONSIDER RESHUFFLE OF CABINET ONLY IF IT WOULD BENEFIT COUNTRY BUT ADDED HE WOULD NOT RPT NOT MAKE ANY CHANGES MERELY BECAUSE OF PRESSURE. HE ADDED, "I CAN PROMISE YOU THERE WILL BE NO CABINET RESHUFFLE IN ANY CASE BEFORE THE 1976 BUDGET BILL IS PASSED." SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SAGUAN KAMVONGSAR, TOLD EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 29 THAT BUDGET BILL LIKELY TO BE PASSED BEFORE OCTOBER 13. WE CAN EXPECT INTENSE POLITICAL MANEUVERING BEFORE THAT TIME, WITH

KRIT WATCHING CAREFULLY FROM THE SIDELINES TO SEE IF THE  
DEVELOPING SITUATION GIVES HIM OPPORTUNITIES TO CLIMB OFF THE  
SHELF.  
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